

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ESL STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEIVED,
ACTUAL PERFORMANCE AND
LEARNING NEEDS IN ORAL
PRESENTATIONS: A CASE STUDY**

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. The thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to investigate ESL students' learning needs in oral presentations. Therefore, the study looked into the students' self-perceived and actual performance in oral presentations and the amount of help they needed in oral presentation skills with regard to organisation, content, delivery and language. Besides that, this study also investigated students' attitude, motivation and learning orientation towards oral presentations. The case study was conducted in a public university located in Selangor, Malaysia. It involved a randomly selected intact group of 40 ESL students and two lecturers teaching the Oral Communication Course. The data were collected using a needs analysis questionnaire, an oral presentation test and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS Version 20.0 and involved the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics whilst qualitative data was deductively and inductively analysed to answer the research questions in the study. The findings revealed that students had a very positive attitude towards oral presentations and they were motivated to learn oral presentation skills. Besides that, findings also revealed that these students prefer teacher-directed lessons with opportunities for them to practice group oral presentations where immediate oral feedback could be obtained from the lecturer. More importantly, the results showed that there was a significant difference in students' self-perceived and actual performance with regard to delivery and language but no significant differences were seen in terms of organisation and content. In terms of delivery the students highlighted the need to improve their articulation, enunciation and how to avoid verbal pauses so that they could speak in a professional manner. With regard to language, the students' learning needs included the ability to speak accurately using a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Learning needs in terms of organisation focussed on students' ability to synthesise information and the use of connectives and discourse markers to present a coherent speech whilst learning needs for content focussed on students' need to prepare well-researched speeches with relevant supporting details and summing up with an appropriate conclusion. Based on these findings, this study has proposed an instructional framework which encompasses not only the elements of oral presentations but also aspects such as learning orientation, attitude and motivation. The findings in this study also imply that it is important that the lecturers teaching tertiary students focus on teaching students oral presentation skills using a carefully designed oral presentation course tailored to address the specific students' learning needs.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a fast growing country, Malaysia is faced with the challenge of a more competitive employability landscape and the increased need for 21st century skills especially for graduates. In an era of globalization and competitiveness, employers are looking for versatile graduates who are able to drive their organizations to compete successfully in the market. Most studies showed that the highest ranking of employability skills from an employer's perspective was communication skills (Hariati & Mun, 2011; Rahmah, Ishak & Lai, 2011; Brooks, 2013). The importance of communication is not surprising when we consider the astounding amount of time people spend communicating on the job. On average, executives spend 75 to 80 per cent of the time communicating about 45 minutes of every hour (Adler, Elmhurst & Lucas, 2013). According to Wrench (2013), "communication in organisations is as important as breathing is to human life" (p.9).

Despite the importance of communication skills for graduates' employability, employers continuously report that new employees are deficient in communication skills (Bell, 2014). Studies have shown that graduates in Malaysia lack communicative competence at the workplace (Bhattacharyya, 2011). Employers are urging institutions of higher learning (IHL hereafter) to produce graduates who with effective communication skills to meet the demand of the job market and to compete in the international arena (Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Sahari, 2013).

Due to this urgency, one of the pillars of the New Economic Model (NEM), in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015), places special emphasis on skills training to ensure that Malaysia develops the necessary human capital to meet industry requirements (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). This is further emphasised by Quek (2008), who stated that IHL needs to